

## Opening Comments

Barnett K. Kramer, MD

Thank you, Dr. Kleinman.

Good morning. I am Barry Kramer, Director of the NIH Office of Medical Applications of Research(OMAR). I am pleased to welcome all of you to this NIH Consensus Development Conference on the Diagnosis and Management of Dental Caries. As Dr. Kleinman mentioned, this conference is sponsored by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR). Cosponsors include the National Institute on Aging and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Oral health is an important indicator, as well as a determinant, of general health. Dental caries is a major public health problem. By adulthood, more than two-thirds of Americans have lost at least one permanent tooth to decay, and about a quarter of Medicare eligible people require full dentures. Despite substantial progress in the prevention of tooth decay over the last several decades, much remains to be learned and to be applied at the clinical and public health levels. Because of the substantial impact of dental caries on health and on quality of life, the National Institutes of Health, in partnership with the FDA, has convened this conference to review the current state of the art in diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of dental caries.

To this end, Dr. Kleinman and her colleagues have commissioned a systematic literature review in collaboration with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality for some of the major questions for this conference. This approach provides a formal assessment of the quality of evidence informing decisions about prevention and management of dental caries. The report serves as one of the key tools that the panel will use in its deliberations, and the report is being released along with the consensus statement of this conference. The National Library of Medicine also has provided a bibliography on the conference questions, which will be available to the public in both hard copy and electronic formats.

We have a rather full agenda over the next few days, so I will take just a few moments to outline the conference process. The panel is composed of practicing clinicians, biomedical scientists, clinical study methodologists, and a public representative. We have selected individuals who are not advocates of a particular position under discussion today and who have no clear financial interests in the outcome of the conference. The panel met yesterday evening in executive session and will meet again in private at lunch, as well as after the completion of each of the two days of presentations. Following the presentations of evidence and public discussion, the panel will reconvene in executive session to draft their statement. Dr. Michael Alfano, Dean of the New York University College of Dentistry, is the panel chair. He will present the panel's draft statement on Wednesday morning for public comment. The panel will then reconvene in executive session to consider revisions of the draft statement based upon the public discussion. Finally, they will hold a press conference on the draft recommendations on Wednesday at 1pm.

The panel will base its consensus statement on the systematic literature analysis and other medical evidence they have been reviewing, on the presentations by experts in the field over the next two days, and on the public comments. In preparation for this conference the panel has

already carefully reviewed available clinical studies and evidence addressing the six primary questions before them. The invited speakers are experts who have kindly consented to present their scientific data and their opinions on the issues under consideration. The panel will have the opportunity to pose questions to the speakers. We have asked speakers to disclose financial and scientific interests in the questions under consideration today. In addition, members of the panel or audience should feel free to inquire about any such ties, which they think could be appropriate in judging their opinions or presented evidence.

As you can see, this conference will combine elements of a scientific meeting with presentation of data, a town meeting with public discussion periods, and a judicial proceeding with weighing of quality of evidence by the panel that then develops a final summary of evidence and recommendation.

I want to acknowledge the important contributions to this meeting from Dr. Alice Horowitz, who served as the institute coordinator from the National Institute of Dental Craniofacial Research, as well as Dr. Isabel Garcia. Mr. Jerry Elliot of the Office of Medical Applications of Research ably assisted them throughout the process. I also want to thank all of the speakers who are contributing their time and comments on these important health issues. Special thanks goes to Dr. Alfano and to the hard working panelists gathered today.

At this point, I would like to ask our panelists to introduce themselves, starting from my far right—and then turn the meeting over to Dr. Alfano.